SEVEN LEICESTERSHIRE WILLS

by

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The following wills were examined in the course of researches that culminated in The Incised Slabs of Leicestershire and Rutland, and were all incorporated in the original M.S. of that work. Exigencies of space, however, forbade more than a brief quotation from three of them, and the other four had perforce to be omitted. All are well worth perusal, particularly the long home-made one of Robert Herrick, uncle of the poet and M.P. for Leicester in the memorable year of the Armada. It is fitting that they should now be published, not merely for their interest to Leicestershire folk, but still more on account of the sidelights they throw on family life and the standard of living among town magnates and country gentlemen in Tudor and early Stuart times. I have preserved the original and often wayward punctuation and spelling, with their many quaint inconsistencies. Letters placed within round brackets are represented in the original by contraction marks.

The tomb for which 10 marks (£6 13s. 4d.) is provided by John Turville is probably the contemporary one now in the N. chapel at Thurlaston which bears the finely-carved alabaster effigies of an armed man and a lady. If the widow got it for that sum, she made an uncommonly good bargain, but one suspects that she would have had to exceed it to obtain a monument of such quality.

In placing on record John Ruding’s will it may be mentioned that his monument, a small incised slab of alabaster somewhat thinly engraved, was recently found in St. Mary de Castro, concealed beneath the organ bellows, when the instrument was shifted to a new position. John does not seem to have owned any property in Leicestershire, though resident in the county, his lands all lying in the neighbouring shires of Warwick and Northampton.

Two things stand out in Robert Whatton’s will: the unusual bequest of his boots (riding-boots, no doubt, as the normal contemporary footwear for pedestrians was shoes), and the legacy to his brother and sister in Norfolk. This is couched in rather curious terms; they are to get it only if they demand it of the executor, but no specific obligation is laid on him to inform them of it. One wonders what occasioned this queer provision and whether the legatees in question ever got the money.

The will of Richard Dilke conjures up a mental picture of the interior of the manor house at Kirkby Mallory as it must have looked in Elizabethan times. The gift of “tenant’s improvements” to the son is significant, the house not being the testator’s property, but held on lease. It is interesting to find that a male relative, acknowledged as such, had at one time been employed as a servant, but this is less surprising than might appear at first sight, the family being one of those newly risen to gentility on the wreck of the monastic system. It will be observed, with perhaps a smile, that in an age of “free for all”, Mr. Dilke was inclined to be meticulous over his spelling.
The two Herrick wills are, of course, the gems. John’s, the shorter, introduces us to the household of a well-to-do tradesman who has worked hard, served twice as the civic head of his community, and raised a numerous family—the inscription on his tombstone in the cathedral testifies that he and Mary his wife lived together in the same house for more than 52 years “and in all that tyme never buried man woman nor childe, though they were sometimes 20 in houshold”—a proud boast, surely, and a rare one, in those days of large-scale infant mortality and frequent visitations of the plague. Incidentally, one wonders how a copy of Calvin’s translation of the Bible into French came his way, as he is unlikely to have had much, if any acquaintance with that tongue, though he certainly used the book to good purpose, after his own fashion, by stripping off the covers and utilising them to rebind his New Testament, doubtless by that time somewhat the worse for wear. His possession of the book De Proprietatibus Rerum seems to indicate some interest in the natural sciences.

More important still is the very detailed will of Robert his son, himself thrice mayor, a clear and admirably drafted document, registering, albeit incidentally, the considerable rise in the family fortune effected in less than 30 years by his skill and exertion. The items of clothing, plate and furnishings bequeathed afford lively glimpses of the good house he kept and the state and dignity in which he must have gone to church and about his civic functions. His lodestone and crystal suggest that he inherited his father’s scientific interests. One would like to have seen his collection of pictures, of which one alone can now be identified, his own splendid three-quarter length portrait that hangs in the Guildhall. It is perhaps to be deplored that he is there displayed in the severe black of his churchgoing attire, in which, indeed, he makes a most becoming figure, but one longs for the “grograine gowne with the tuftaffatie cape”.

Robert Herrick, like his father, was buried in St. Martin’s. The tombstone now exposed to view on the floor at the W. end of St. Catherine’s chapel (see The Incised Slabs of Leicestershire and Rutland, 101) is only a copy of the original slab, which Mr. Colin Ellis found recently under the carpet just to the E. of it. This slab, of dark slate (approximate dimensions 80 in. by 34 in.), is very badly perished, and the inscription in places almost obliterated.

On Parson Crosley’s testament there is nothing to say, beyond noting, with due relish, the sly humour that lays the naughty boy of the family under contribution to bury the goose that has laid him so many golden eggs.

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John Turville of Newhall, Thurlaston (1506) (P.C.C. 15 Adeane)

“I John Turvyle of Newhall(e) in the Countie of Leicest(e) esq. . . . my body to [be] buried in the Chauncell(e) of the Chirch of Thurlston(e) afor the ymage of Saint Savioure and my best beeste to my principall(e) as the Custom is there and viij torches and xij lb of Waxe to be made in xxiiij tapers of half pownds to brenne abowte my body at my Dirige and Masse. and on my vijth daye. I bequeith to six pore men vj gownes of blak Clothe and vj hads [?hoods] of the same and an C s(hillings) of mony to an honeste preest to sing for my sowle and for the sowles of my fader and my moder
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and alle cresten sowles and for Sir John Bell sowle the space of a yere after
my decesse and I bequeith to the said Chirch(e) of Thurleston(e) a Vestiment
of reed Velvet or of Damaske the price ij li. vj s. viij d and to the chirch(e)
of Aston fflamwyle a baner clothe of sylk to the crosse the price viij s. And
I bequeith x s. of mony to the Warke and behoof of the church of saint
Anne of Sutton of bonyntong(e) and xx s. of mony to the gilde of Corpus (Christ)i
at Saint Martyne chirch at Leicet(er) And I bequeith X m(a)rcs of mony to
be bestowed upon a tombe of Alabastre or of marbyll(e) for me by the
discretion of my Wif or such Counseill(e) as she will advise". Son Antony
gets property at Croft, Sharnford and Woodhouse; son Richard property in
“Walton and Burton on the olds". Also mentioned, wife Kateryn, son and
heir apparent William, and daughters Elizabeth and Ursula. Residue to
Kateryn, his wife, appointed executor; supervisor Robert Fowleshurste, M.A.
Proved at Lambeth 3 November 1506. (Made 25 June 1506)

John Ruding of Westcotes (1548) (P.C.C. 15 Populwell)

"I John Ruding of Westcots near Leicestre in the County of Leicestre
Gent. . . . . my body to be buried in the parishe churche of Saint Maryes
in Leicestre in the Chapell of the holie Trynitie next to my first wiffe." To
the high altar of Lincoln, for tithes forgotten, 4 pence. Towards the
reparations of St Mary Church aforesaid 6s. 8d. To the poor of aforesaid
parish 20/-. To the reparations of Astley Church in the County of Warwick
6s. 8d. To reparation of Chilverscoton Church in same County 10/-. To
the poor of said parish 40/-. To Exhall Church within the County and
shire of the Cytie of Coven(try) 3s. 4d. To his three youngest sons, John,
Richard and Thomas, all his property in Mancetter, co. Warwick, also “my
water myll called Cuttell Myln in Chilv(er)scoton”. To eldest son Humfrey
remainder of testator’s property in Chilvers Coton, and property at Astley,
co. Warwick. To sons John and Thomas the farm term and lease that he
has in Westcotts for the duration of said lease. Also mentioned are his
daughters Elizabeth and Agnes, his brother William Ruding of Coventry,
and brother-in-law Michael Purefey and his children. Other property men­
tioned at Draycott, co. Warwick and Brackley, co. Northants. Proved in
London, 28 Oct. 1548. (Made 23 June 1548)

Robert Whatton of Long Whatton (1577) (Leicestershire Wills Register
Book 1577, folio 33)

“. . . I bequeth my bodie to therth to be buryed in churche of long­
whatton or e(lse) where it shall plese god to call me to his m(er)cies. It(em)
I gyve & bequeth to the poore people of longwhatton v s. to be destributed
& gyven theym at the Discretione of mr p(ar)sonne & Rob(er)t Lawrence.”
Annuities to wife Margaret and son Robert; his brother-in-law, James Abney,
gent., to have the education and bringing up of said Robert. Also to Robert
£20, and a like sum to each of testator’s daughters “Ellen, Ane, Marie,
Katheren, Phillipp”. “To my syster collett A frees gowne of x s. value &
to hyr husband A frees cotte. It(em) I gyve unto my brother & sister in
Northfooke [Norfolk] xxte shillungs A pece yf they shall demaund yt of my
executor. It(em) I gyve unto marie Dude An Ewe Lambe or ij s. iiiij d in
money. It(em) I gyve unto Richard Heyward my blake cott & to Edward
chatterton my Boots & to J[o]hn Bugge [altered to "Budge"] A payr of shoes & to Richard Daykyn my best Ewe Lambe. It(em) I gyve t(o) ev(er)ie god child that I have vj d A pesse? & to ev(er)ie one of my serv(an)ts xij d?. Residue to eldest son George, appointed full executor. Proved 29 September 1577. (Made 1 September 1577)

John Herrick of Leicester (1589) (Leicestershire Wills, 1589, No. 55)

"I John Eyrick of Leicester Irnem(o)ngar the Eldar . . . my Boddy I bee Queath to the Earth from which it was taken. And to bee Buryed in Sent martin's Chirche in Leicester' in they8 north syde of the Lybrary their as Mr Manby & Mr hallam lyth [sic] buried yf my Wiffe and Executors doe Thinke good or els wheire the9 will in some othar place." Goods, etc., to be divided, half to his wife, other half equally between his son Thomas and daughter Mary Eyrick, to whom he also leaves two tenements in Parchment Lane.10 "My howse that I nowe dwell in And have done since I was married And Bought of my Brother Nyccolas Eyrick I doe gyve and be queath after my disshes11 during hir lyfe to my Loving Wiffe Mary Eyrick and the garden to hit belonging W(hi)ch I purchased W(i)th my hwasse W(hi)ch garden Lyeth in Sop(er) lane12 and in the holding now of Will(ia)m Ryvet also during her nature Rall13 lyfe W(i)th all the portals selings benchis and glas a Bout the hall both parlaws counting hows and kechin"; after her death to go to his son Robert on certain conditions. Legacies to sons Thomas and John, to sons Nycolis and William Eyrick of London, and [married] daughters Haws and Holden of London, Elizabeth Stanford, Cristiom Broock and Alice Hynd. To Thomas (inter alia) "the Byble Lying in my hall Windoe And the New testament kevered W(i)t(h) A black hillong15 of Mr Callvins translac(i)on".16 John gets, among other things, "the Boke in my hall Windoe intytled Bartholomeus De proprietatibus Rerum", and Mary the unmarried daughter "the g(rea)t Boke of Martars or monume(n)ts." 11 Ends: "Written w(i)th my owne hand and ?shealed they8 xit(hl Day of Marche In the year of o(u)r Lord After the Computac(i)on of England 1588.18 By me John Eyrick." Proved at Leicester on the following 7 September.

Richard Dilke of Kirkby Mallory (1595) (Leicestershire Wills, 1595, No. 1)

"In the name of god amen the xiijth day of februarie in the xxxvijth yeare of the Reigne of O(u)r sov(er)eigne ladie Elizabeth by the grace of god of England france & Irelande Quene defendresse of the faith &c. I Richard Dylke of Kirckbye Mallorie in the Countie of Leic(ester) gent doo make this my last will & testm(en)te of all my goods Chattels & Cattels, assuringe my selfe that it will please god almightie thorough19 the meanes of Jhesus Christ my savior & redeemer to receive my ['sol" crossed out] soule & trusting that my executor will take care of the buriall of my bodie in the Church of Kirckby Mallorie aforesaid: fffirste I give to the mother church of Lincoln vj d & tow(ar)ds the rep(ar)ation of the p(ar)ish church of Kirckby aforesaid vj s. viij d. It(em) whereas I have covenanted w(i)th Mr ffrauncis Cave & Thom(a)s Cave of Baggrave in the said Countie of Leic(ester) esq(u)i)res to leave Elizabeth my wife at my decease either two hundred pounds in goods or monye or else a farm worth v li. by yeare &
one hundred pounds in goods & Cattals & monye, To the trewe p(er)formaunce whereof I give unto my said wife one hundred poundes to be paid her by my Executor in goods Cattell & monye, & my said wife shall live in my nowe dwelling house for her firste yeare after my decease w(i)th allowaunce after five pounds the yeare, & after to be provided for by my executor to fulfill my said coven(au)nte: It(em) I give to George Dylke my eldest sonne the demise lease & terme of yeares & the Indenture & lease thereof, in & to the Manner house & pleise and other the landes ten(emen)ts & hereditations in kirckbye mallorye aforesaid graunted by John late Abbot of the Dissolved house or Monasterie of o(u)r Ladie in the Meadows of Leicest(e)r aforesaid unto Thom(a)s Dylke my father deceased, dated the tenth Dale of Juley in the xxvjth yeare of the Reigne of Kinge Henrye the eight for fowre scoare & one years Also the Demise lease & terme of yeares of and in p(ar)cell of the further Meere close w(i)thin the p(ar)ish of Kirckby aforesaid to the said George his execut(or)is & assignes: Also I give unto my said sonne George the Lease of my windemill to beginne one yeare fullie expired after my Deceass: And to my said sonne George all the glasse casements, shutts, Doorres, lockes, the greate brewing Leade, the greate brasse pott the kilne, the presse in my p(ar)lor, the bigger cubbord in my p(ar)lor, the Longe table in the greate p(ar)lor & forme & bench to yt, the tables in the hall & formes and benches there, the beare wyces in the buttryes, the shelves there, and in the kitchin the salting troughes, the moulding trough, the Lronymes, racks, hooks, & cobirons in the kitchin, the dresser there, the coffer w(i)thin the greate chambre Doore, the greate Binne, all pales, postes, & railes, yatts, the woode of hovells & postes in the barne yard, & at the barne yard side, six lathers to be sett forth by them executors & ov(er)seers, reserving the use of these things for thone yeare after my Decease heare in & aboute this house: It(cm) I give unto my sonne Richard yearlie for xxtie yeares if he Live so Longe out of the Annuitye w(hi)ch my sonne George is to paie tenne pounds: And to my Daughters feninn(a) and Anne two hundred markes a peece, to be paid them at their or either of their day of mariadge being ordred by my Executor, & if they will not be ordred by my executor then I will that they receive their said p(ar)tes when & as they shall accomplishe thage of xxvj yeares of age: And to Grace Greene fiftye poundes to be paid at her mariadge soe she be ordred by my executor, & if she will not be ordred by my executor then to receive her said portion when she shall accomplish thage of xxvj yeares in full satisfaction of all legacies or bequestes to her given by Richard Greene late of Melton Mowbray in the said Countie of Leic(ester) her father deceased: Also I will that my said daughters feninn(a) & Anne & the said Grace Greene shall have their sev(er)all findings of sufficiante meate drinke apparel & other necessaries fittinge their callings w(i)th my executor till they be p(re)ferred in mariadge or have their p(ar)tes paid as afore: And if anie of them my Daughters Dislike to be w(i)th my executor then I will that either of them have five pounds yearelle till their mariadge or paym(en)t as afore for their maynteinannce: It(em) I give to ev(er)ie one of my childrens children nowe living excepte the s(a)id Grace Greene, fyve pounds apiece as they shall sev(er)allie come to thage of xxj yeares of age: And to John Dylke my cosen & late Servaunte fortie shillings, & to ev(er)ie of my nowe servaunts
tenne shillings apeece besides their wags [wages] except to Jeys 26 Toplise my servaunte whom I give fortie shillings: It(em) I appointe Will(ia)m Dylke my seconde sonne my Executor to receive six hundred pounds of my said sonne George accordinge to the trewe meaneinge of the Indentures of Covenaunte made the xxviiijth daie of September in the xxxiijth yeare of the Reigne of o(u)r said Sov(er)eigne Ladie Quene Elizabeth: as by the same more plainelicie appeareth and the same to be received to thuse of this my last will & testm(en)te: Also I give unto my said sonne Will(ia)m whom I ordene & make my full & sole executor of this my last will & testm(en)te all my Leases goods & chattels moveables & unmoveables heare not Devised, Debts owing unto me, plate, Jewells monye Cattell & whatsoev(er) is myne to have, enjoye, & to be possessed thereof to thuse of this my last will & testm(en)te, to execute the same in [sic] iustelie & accordinge to my meaninge, my funeralls Discharged, Debts paid & Legacies p(er)formed I give all the residewe to my said executor, his executors & assignes: It(em) I ordaine my dearelie beloved master & frende S(i)r John Harrington of Exton in the Countie of Rut(land) knight, my loving Cosen Mr Thom(a)js Cave of Baggrave in the Countie of Leic(est)er esq(u)ir(e) my sonne George Dylke & my Cosen Will(ia)m Rob(er)ts of Sutton in the said Countie of Leic(est)er gent Sup(er)visors to see this my laste will & testm(en)te well & faithfullie executed & p(er)formed accordinge to my true & good meaneing hearein, & that my said Executor shall discharge all their Charges w(hi)ch they or anie of them shall bestowe in travell aboute the p(er)formaunce of this my last will & testm(en)te: And if my said sonne George [one word indecipherable] putt in good securitie w(i)thin one moneth after my Decease for the p(er)formaunce of this my will, then I will that he shall take upon him this charge, that is to be the Executor of this my last will in manner & forme aforesaid: And if anie of my Daughters Do Dep(ar)te before the receipte of their porc(i)ons, then the p(ar)te or p(ar)tes of her or them soe Deceasinge, shall remaine to my executor, & this wilbe an occasion the rather to move my said sonne George to be myne executor:"  

[George had evidently jibbed at being executor, but thought better of it, and having found the necessary security within the time allowed, was formally declared executor by the archdeacon’s court at Leicester.]

Robert Herrick of Leicester (1617) (P.C.C. 73 Meade)

This, like the will of his father, John Herrick, is a home-made one.

"I Robert Heyricke of the borough of Leicester and one of the aldermen of the same towne . . . my bodye to be buried at the discretion of my Executors . . . I doe give unto Elizabeth Heyricke 18 my true and faythfull wife the howse I dwell in w(i)th shoppes, sallars, &e and the Corne wall garden, 29 all duringe her naturall lyfe, my daughter Orpwood 20 to have her dwellinge rent free w(i)th her sayde wife, duringe their lives together. And if it should please God my daughter Orpwood should survive, then my daughter Orpwood to have the whole house & garden rent free during her lyfe. I give the lease of the nexte howse to my wife, and my saide daughter. I give unto my said wife the” [a word crossed out] “Gray fryars w(i)th all buildings thereupon duringe her naturall life. My daughter Orpwood to
have her key, and walkes for her recreac(i)on, during her lyfe; And my wife payinge foorth of the saide ffryars, as heareafter is expressed. I give unto my wife the Tenter Chase duringe her lyfe, payinge foorth of the same, as is heareafter expressed. I give unto my said wife my Close, or Orcharde in Belgrave gate, in the houldinge of Anthonie ffietcher, and to her heires for ever, w(i)th the Tenements adjoyninge to it, w(hi)ch she purchased of John Saunders and to her heires for ever. Item I give her a payre of goulde Braceletts. Item a Ringe w(i)th a Tirkis and all other Rings w(hi)ch she hath alreadie. Item I give unto her, for her lyfe, my greate gilte Salte w(i)th the cover. Item a Bole gilt, w(i)th a cover w(hi)ch hath my Grandfathers armes of... Item I give mor(eover) my Silver Bason, and Ewer double gilte, a Pepp(er)boxe of silver double gilte, a Castinge bottle of silver double gilte, Little Trencher salt double gilt, Item flower greate gilte Spoonses. All this Plate & ?spoons I give to my wife, for her lyfe, & after, to my sonne Tobias Heyricke, and after his decease, and my wives, to his nexte heir. Item I give unto my wife, all my Linnens whatsoever. Item all my pictures whatsoev(er). My will is that the Presse in the great chamber, the drawinge table in the hall, and all the Seelinge in, and aboute the howse, and ffryars, and Glasse to stande, and Continewe as heayrcloomes to the howse, w(i)th the Stonetable, and frame. I doo give foorth of the howse I dwell in ffive poundes ? . . yearelie for ever, w(hi)ch five poundes to be paide into the Maiors hande, for the tyme beinge, every yeare yearly for ever, on the Seconde daye of february, and by the Maior, and fower Justices... Item I give unto the church wardens of St. Martins, to be to the repairinge of the saide Churche, Three pounds. Item I give foorth of the Graye ffryars yearely for ever ffortye shillings yearely to be given by the Maior, and Justices, to fforty poore widdowes, some daye before St Thomas daye or at St Thom(a)s daye at the furthest, whereof Twentye to be of St Martins parrishe, the other where mr Maior, and the Justices, w(i)thin the towne shall thinke best. Item I give my sonne Tobias heyricke Parson of houghton, all the Lande, w(hi)ch was sometyme Mr Dannotts land, as hill close: Stone meadowe, three lowe meadowes w(i)th a lane leadinge onto the same meadowes, w(i)th the Boe bridge Close, w(i)th the water lagge w(i)th a tenem(en)t at the Bridgefoote, w(i)th the Augustine ffriars, and a meadowe to the same as I thinke appeareth by a Deede betweene my brother Yarde, and mee. I give more unto my sonne my greate Signett of goulde Item my seale of goulde, w(i)th my Grandfathers Bondes armes. Item a Loadestone. Item a Christal! stone. Item my Watch. Item a paire of Silke Stockings and one paire of wrought velvet breeches, and one wrought velvet Jerkin. I give to my daughter Orpwoode my howse w(i)th thapp(er)-ten(a)nces, w(i)th the backeside w(hi)ch Gators wife nowe dwelleth in for
her lyfe, The reverc(i)on of it to my sonne Tobye, and his heires for ever. I give unto my daughter Orpwoode my greate Cipres Chest w(hi)ch standeth in my brothers chamber. I give unto my sonne heyricke wife my Tenement in Goswell-gate, to dwell in durninge her lyfe, The inheritance thereof, to my sonne, and his heires for ever. I give unto my daughter Orpwood, the Gowne I have of hers faced w(i)th Damaske, and a longe Cloke of Cloth w(i)th coloured buttons. Item I give my daughter Dorcas my Tenement, or Inne called the White harte, and to her heires for ever. Item I give unto her my little Cipres Chest, w(hi)ch hath soemany tills in it. I give to her her Virginalls I give unto my brother S(i)r William heyricke knight, my Iron Chest. Item my fyne playinge Tables. Item to his sonne Robert my godsonne in readie money ffive pounds. Item to Robert heyricke, my brother Nicholas his sonne my godsonne, ffive powndes. Item I give to my Wife, my longe Cypres chest, w(hi)ch standeth in the greate Chamber. I give unto my daughter Dorcas her Cithern, and a Chayre w(hi)ch was the Duchesse of Suffolkes. I give unto my Sonne Mills of London, and his wife, One hundredth powndes in readie money. I give unto my good Cosin Mrs Kynnersley widdowe in goulde ffive pounds. Item to my Cosin Mr John Kynnersley her sonne, in goulde ffive pounds. To my godsonne Roberte Noble, my sonne Nobles sonne ffive markes. To Katherine Noble my gooddaughter ffive marks. To John Wheeler my godsonne ffive mark. I give unto Elizabeth Walker, to be paide att her marriage Tenne powndes. I give unto Vincent Norrington in money, to be paide at the discretion of my Executors, Tenne pownd. Item to Symon Norrington, to be paide at the discretion of myne Executors, yt they see any likelihoode of goodnesse in him, Tenne powndes. I give to my sister Holden in money, to be paide p(re)sentlie after my dep(ar)ture, Three pounds, sixe shillings; eyght pence. To my brother Thomas Heyricke, my best Doublet of Satten, cut upon Crymson sarconnet, and a payre of Breeches to it, w(i)th a Jerkyn, at my Wives discretion. To my brother John, my Scarlett gowne, and Tippett. To my brother Manbye a mourninge gowne. To my sonne Sacheverill , my best grograme gowne. And to his sonne Joseph, a Twenty shillings peece. To Suzanna a twenty shillings peece. I give to John Whatton a twenty shillings peece. To Robert Billers a twenty shillings peece. To every servante that is dwellinge w(i)th mee, at my Dep(ar)ture Twenty shillings. I give unto John Williams my Wives godsonne ffive pounds. I give unto Robert Hinde my godsonne Twenty shillings. To his brother George Hynde, Twenty shillings. I bequeathe to the p(ar)ishes of St Maries, St Margarets, St Nicholas, Allhallows, to be paide to them before my buryall, to every of the saide Churches Tenne shillings, towards the repayre of their Churches. I give more foorth of the Gray ffryars yearely for ever, to be paide unto the Schoole Master that teacheth the petties, or to the place wherein Mr Thom(a)s hunt now teacheth, Thirteene shillings, fower pence, to be paide yearely by whomsoever shall have the grounde, at the feast of St Michaell Tharchangel45 I give foorth of the Spittle house Close, Three pounde, Sixe shillings, Eight pence a yeare for ever to such yuses as doth appeare in a Deede before this tyme, made; the Inheritaunce thereof to my sonne heyricke, and his heires for ever. I give unto the twentye-sixe poore
persons in the newe hospitall Three shillings fower pence a yeere; w(hi)ch is to them all, flower pounde, sixe shillings eight pence. I doo give & bequeath unto Mr George Rogers, Clarke, my sonne in lawe, and unto Ruth, his wife my daughter, the some of Tenne pounde of good and lawfull money, to be paid unto them, at thend of one yeare next after my decease, yt the saide George and Ruthe be then livinge, And ?set yearely afterwarde, the like some of Tenne pounde, to be paid unto them, at the end of every yeare, duringe the continewance of Mr Plumbes lease, w(hi)ch my wife hath in keepinge, w(hi)ch at this p(re)sent, I thinke, is twentye-two yeares in beinge And if it shall happen that the said Ruth shall overlive her busbande the said George, then I doo give and bequeath unto her, the said [sic] some of One hundreth poundes of Currant Englishe money To be paide unto her the saide Ruthe w(i)t(h)in sixe monethes after the decease of the saide George Rogers her busbande. And if it shall happen that my daughter Ruthe doo dye before her busbande then I doo give and bequeath unto such of the saide Children as be then livinge of the said George and Ruthe, at the tyme of the death of the saide Ruthe the foresaid some of one hundred pounde, to be equallie divided amongst them, for their better education and mainten(a)nce, And to be paide unto them, when they shall severally accomplishe, and come to the age of Twentye and one yeares.” [The same provision is then made for his sons-in-law John Wheeler and Martha his wife, and Thomas Noble and Frances his wife, and their children.] “And I doo make and ordayne executors of this my last will, and Testament my faithfull and lovinge wife Elizabeth heyricke and my faithfull and lovinge Daughter Elizabeth Orpwoode, to se this my will p(er)formed. Overseers of the same, I doo make, and entreate my sonne in lawe Mr Thom(a)s Sacheverill, my sonne in lawe Mr James Androwe, and my Cosin William Davyd to take some paines in aydinge my Executors to see this my will p(er)formed. In witnes heareof I have caus’d this will to be made; and written it w(i)th my owne hand, and putte my seale in the presence of theis whose names are underwritten. Item I doo give unto my brother in lawe George Brooks, a lease of the howse wherein he dwelleth, upon the same rent, and Condic(i)ons, as he doth now enioye the same, for Tenne Yeares after my dep(ar)ture. Item I give unto my sonne Andrew, a Grogrine Gowne furder, w(i)th Budge. Item I give unto his sonne James Andrew, a Twenty shillings peece of Goulde. Item I give to William Davyd, my grograine Gowne w(i)th the Tuftaffatie Cape. In witness whereof . . .” [signed “Robert Heyricke” and witnessed by John Whatton and William Allutt.]

[Codicil] “Moreover all the rest of my goodes & Chattells, not bequeathed before, I doo give and bequeath them unto my two before named Executors of this my last will, to be devided betweene them, as they in their Consciences shall thinke best. Item I give unto the Mayor, Assistants, Chaplainne, & poore of the hospital of the holye Trinitie in Newarke, neare the Borougle or towne of Leicester, of the foundac(i)on of James, Kinge of England, and to their Successors out of my Gounde, and Land called the Gray ffryars, and the ffanciscane ffryars, w(i)thin the said Boroughge of Leicester, one yearely rent of five pounds, and tenne shillings, by the year; That is to every one of the poore, one shillinge. The said yearely rent to
be paid unto them, out of the said Lands called the Gray ffryars, w(i)thin the space of one whole yeare next after the death of Elizabeth my sayde wife, and soe afterwarde ?yearely by at, or before the Eleaventh daye of November for ever. Item my will is that my sonne Tobias heyricke, shall have after the death of his mother the remainder of myne aforesaid Land called the Gray ffryars, to him, and to his heires for ever, upon thes two Condic(i)ons followinge, and not otherwise. The forme whereof is, that w(i)thin one yeare after my death, hee shall put in such securitie as my Executors, and Overseers of this my will before named, shall thinke sufficient for the trewe payinge of the some of One hundred poundes of lawfull money of England, for the use of suche of his sisters children or Childrens children as shalbe lyvinge and in moste neede, w(i)thin one yeare after the death of myne aforesaid wife: And the other Condic(i)on is, that he, and his heires shalbe readie, and content, at anie time w(i)thin Two yeares next ensewinge after my death upon reasonable request made unto anie of them ?to confirme all, and every of the said Legacies before given, by mee in this my last will and Testament, soe farre as it shall lye in them, and in their power, w(i)thout their charge, and w(i)thout their trouble, to goe anie farther then unto Leicester beforenamed: w(hi)ch two Condic(i)ons I doo desire and Charge them that they will p(er)forme them both accordinge to my full meaninge in the wordes abovewritten: W(hi)ch if they shall not doo, but breake, or fayle to perforem ecyther of them, Then, and in that Case, I doo give, and my will is to give the said grownde and Lands called the Graye ffryars, or the ffranciscans ffryars together w(i)th all the buildings, and trees that be therein, unto the sayde Mr” [Maior], “Assistants, Chaplaine and poore of the hospitall of the holy Trinitie in Newarke neare the boroughe, or towne of Leicester of the foundation of James Kinge of England, and to their Successors immediately after the death of Elizabeth my said wife, for ever, They both takinge order that the aforesaid Hundred pounds maye be truely paid for the use of my grandchildren aforesaid, out of the first rents, & profits of the said grounde, and lands untill it be fully paide. And alsoe they dischargin g e & payinge from tyme to tyme, all the Legacies, and yearely payments, w(hi)ch I have before, in this my last Will and Testament given out, and forth of the said grounde and Lands. In witness whereof . . . the Third daye of June 1618.” (Signed; witnesses Thomas Sacheverill, John Whatton, William Allatt.)

Roger Crosley of Stoughton, Parson of Thurnby (1633) (Leicestershire Wills, 1633, No. 69)

“I Roger Crosley of Stoughton in the Countie of Leic(ester) Clarke: I Bequeath [altered from “Bequest”] my soule to Almighty God, hoping to be saved by the death & passion of my saviour Jesus Ch(rist); & my bodie to be buried in the Chancell [written over “Churche”, which has been crossed through] of Stoughton.” To wife Sara his house in Leicester for term of her natural life, and afterwards to his son Malachi and his wife Elizabeth during their natural lives, and afterwards to Francis [Frances] their daughter and her heirs, “& for want t(her)eof to the heirs of the said Malachie & Elizabeth f(o)r ever. I give to each of my children, unto every one of them an Edward49 shilling.” To each of his grandchildren xii d. “It(em) I give
unto the poore of Stoughton iii s iiiij d. I doe remitt release & for ev(e)r discharg my son Micheiah Crosley of all debts, & dues w(hi)ch he oweth & is indebted unto me be it by bill, bond or p(ro)mise & more especiallie fro(m) five bills or bonds w(hi)ch are yet uncanselled w(i)th this p(ro)viso: & upon this condic(i)on: that my said son Micheiah bestowe upon me att my buriall as my wife shall thinke most convenient: fiftie shillings. It(em). I give unto my children & grand-children the same books as the52 are named in anoth(e)r will fformerlie made; bearing Date the first of June 1629. It(em). I give unto the chappell of Stoughton ii s. Residue to wife Sara, appointed sole executrix. Signed and sealed 4 May 1632. “I intreat my sons Micheas Crosley & Richard Watts51 to be ov(e)rseers of this my last Will”. Proved at Leicester 13 June 1633.

NOTES

1. Per Oxford Dictionary, vii. 1374, the best beast or other chattel of any kind bequeathed, or passing by custom. Pollock and Maitland, English Law (2nd ed., 1911), ii. 363: “There are many traces of local customs which under the name of 'principals' or 'heirlooms', will give him [the heir-at-law] various chattels, not merely his ancestor's sword and hawberk, but the best chattels of every different kind, the best horse (if the church does not take it) and the best ox, the best chair and the best table, the best pan and the best pot.” In this case the best beast evidently went to the church.

2. Sutton Bonington, Notts.

3. Wolds.

4. Died 1549; monument at Aston Flamville.

5. The mother church.

6. Now part of Nuneaton.

7. apiece.

8. the.

9. they.

10. Now New Bond Street.

11. decease.

12. Soaper's Lane lay to N. of Swine's Market (now High Street); it has since disappeared or been absorbed into Free School Lane.

13. natural.

14. covered.

15. loose covering, or cover of a book.

16. The translation of the Bible into French published at Geneva under Calvin's name during his exile at Strasbourg (1538-41), being actually Olivetan's version as revised and corrected by Calvin.

17. John Foxe's Acts and Monuments, popularly known as The Book of Martyrs.

18. 1589 by modern reckoning. The year in England at that time ended on 24 March, contrary to the increasingly widespread practice on the Continent of going back to the Roman civil year, ending on the (previous) 31 December.

19. through.

20. shutters.

21. leaden vat for brewing.

22. andirons.

23. gates.

24. outhouses.

25. the one.


27. Sutton Cheney.


29. Site now covered by S.E. corner of Market Place.

30. Widow of Robert Orpwood, citizen and goldsmith of London, who has a monument in Leicester cathedral.

31. turquoise.

32. wife's

33. 21 December.
34. Water lade—a channel or aqueduct.
35. Presumably William Yarde of Cosby, whose daughter Elizabeth married Robert's son Tobias Herrick (Vincent's Leicester 1619 [College of Arms MS. V 127], 186).
37. Garden.
38. One of the main thoroughfares of 17th-cent. Leicester, leading from Humberstone Gate to Belgrave Gate.
39. Drawers, or compartments.
40. Sir William Herrick of Beaumanor, Leics.
41. Robert Herrick the poet (1591-1674), seventh son of Nicholas Herrick, goldsmith of London (died 1592).
42. Son-in-law.
43. Brother-in-law.
44. The Junior School. (The Free Grammar School was built in 1573-4.)
45. 29 September.
46. Grogram.
47. i.e. trimmed or lined with budge, which Planché defines (Cyclopedia of Costume, i. 63) as "Lambskin with the wool dressed outwards, with which garments were edged or lined".
48. A variety of taffeta.
49. Edward VI.
50. They.
51. Evidently a son-in-law.